Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

INDEX

VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT BRINGS WESTERN PROVINCES TOGETHER 08-08-30

CANOLA COLLEGES FOCUS ON DISEASE DETECTION AND MANAGEMENT 08-08-31

CHALLENGES TO MODELING WINTER COW RATIONS FOUND 08-08-32

UKRAINIAN AG ENTREPRENEURS SEEK SOLUTIONS IN SASKATCHEWAN 08-08-33

GREENCOVER PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO BE SHARED AND CELEBRATED..... 08-08-34

Farm and Food Report is produced weekly by the Zapwell Communications Group for Communications Branch, Saskatchewan Agriculture
Contact: Amanda Dauk
101-3085 Albert Street, REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN S4S 0B1
Telephone: (306) 787-5157, Fax: (306) 787-0216
Internet Page: http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 08-08-30
Week of February 18, 2008

VALUE CHAIN DEVELOPMENT BRINGS WESTERN PROVINCES TOGETHER

Efforts to develop agri-food value chains are growing from a single province base to be delivered right across western Canada, with a new agreement between provinces.

"The Saskatchewan Agri-Food Value Chain Initiative was developed approximately seven years ago, originally funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada," says Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan (ACS) Value Chain Specialist Bryan Kosteroski. "Three years ago, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture and ACS developed the second phase of the program, which was co-funded by both levels of government."

The program delivered an educational awareness program built around learning modules on subjects such as value chain development, marketing strategies, marketing intelligence, and category management. According to Kosteroski, the program has been well received here.

"Those workshops were very well attended, with over 400 people participating over a period of about 16 months," he says. "We have 14 value chain projects either in the process of development or completed in Saskatchewan. Alberta also has a value chain program, and Manitoba just started one last December."

The new Western Canadian Value Chain Initiative arose out of discussions between representatives of the four western provinces and the federal government.

"It was decided that there should be a consistent message across western Canada," Kosteroski says. "We are interested in creating awareness of the program itself, and the various strategies being employed by the agri-food industry. Many of the concepts are about working together in areas like talking to retail buyers, developing category plans, and communicating throughout the sector to make sure producers know what's going on."

The information developed on value chains will now have consistent content and the same look across the west, with the joint effort resulting in new material being made available in Saskatchewan.

"We have just launched an Internet marketing program," says Kosteroski. "Our companies have to take a look at website development, what suits their products, and the customers they are trying to attract. We just completed some organic livestock and vegetable workshops. It gives them more awareness of what potential markets may exist for them both domestically and for export."

(more)

The new co-operation between the provinces and federal government is a sign of the growing importance of this sector.

"You have small, medium, and large companies that are becoming players in the agri-food industry in Canada, and it's not an easy game," says Kosteroski. "It takes time to get into the retail markets, up to 16 months to get a product listed and on the shelf. Producers and companies have to be prepared to work through the process, to tweak their ideas to accommodate the needs of the retailer."

Among the new workshops to be offered in the next year, there will be an emphasis on marketing education, which is seen as a knowledge gap for emerging agri-food companies.

Anyone interested in what the Western Canadian Value Chain Initiative has to offer can get that information from the Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan on their website at www.agcouncil.ca.

-30-

For more information, contact:

Bryan Kosteroski, Value Chain Specialist
Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan
Phone: (306)975-6851
E-mail: kosteroskib@agcouncil.ca

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 08-08-31
Week of February 18, 2008

CANOLA COLLEGES FOCUS ON DISEASE DETECTION AND MANAGEMENT

Knowledge is power when it comes to dealing with disease detection and management.

The Canola Council of Canada is aiming to provide that knowledge through three Canola Colleges this year. There will be one Canola College in each prairie province. The Saskatchewan Canola College is on Tuesday, March 4th at the Delta Bessborough in Saskatoon.

Jim Bessel, a Senior Agronomic Specialist with the Council, says the colleges bring canola growers and their production advisors up to speed on assessing disease risk and managing diseases cost effectively.

"There are a lot of professionals out there who work in the field who are always looking for updates and insight to help their clients. The main thing is to provide key research-based information to create an enhanced information base to those people who are advising producers. By all means, producers should also attend, because the level of understanding and expertise of producers is far greater than it has ever been. Those who attend gain an understanding that allows them to ask the pertinent questions that are relative to their farming enterprise," says Bessel.

The anticipated high price of canola this year will change the math when it comes to disease management. Bessel says the thresholds for when management makes sense will be different than in past years.

"From a profitability perspective, you can make some key decisions that can have a big impact on your bottom line," says Bessel.

The topics for the 2008 Canola Colleges include:

- Aster Yellows in Canola – Understanding leafhoppers and phytoplasmas
- What's New with Blackleg? – Pathotypes, resistance ratings and other management alternatives
- Managing Sclerotinia – Assessing risk and making the most of chemical and biological control
- Clubroot Update – Situation analysis, management challenges and research initiatives.

Bessel says diseases like Clubroot may not be having a direct impact on Saskatchewan right now, but producers need to be informed.

(more)

"It is important to be continually updated on what diseases may be a concern and how we may be able to address them. This event is where you want to be if you really want to get a keener insight into the new things we are dealing with, and analysis on how they may or may not affect us," said Bessel.

Canola Council agronomy specialists will wrap up each college with a discussion of hot topics in canola agronomy, such as changes to the variety testing system, seeding and harvest management, fertility issues, new insects and other disease considerations.

Register on line by visiting www.canola-council.org. Click on "Register! Canola College 2008."

-30-

For more information, contact:

Jim Bessel, North Central and North Eastern Saskatchewan Agronomy Specialist
Canadian Canola Council
Phone: (306) 373-6771

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 08-08-32
Week of February 18, 2008

CHALLENGES TO MODELING WINTER COW RATIONS FOUND

A research study funded by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture's Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) has identified some challenges with the use of computer models to develop rations for winter feeding programs.

A computer model incorporating the latest in beef cattle nutrition research and feeding recommendations was developed by the National Research Council (NRC) in 1996. Researchers Duane McCartney and Hushton Block of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and John McKinnon of the University of Saskatchewan's Department of Animal and Poultry Science set out to check the accuracy of feed intakes and expected weight gains in wintering beef cows as predicted by the model.

"We wanted to ensure the recommendations made for the nutrient requirements for beef cows properly reflected the climate that we have for cows in Saskatchewan and Alberta, as a lot of the research work had been done in the United States," McCartney said. "A lot of the data was put together by extrapolating different kinds of studies."

The researchers used existing data compiled over a period of years by scientists monitoring cattle at the Western Beef Development Centre research farm, as well as research stations in Melfort and Lacombe, Alberta.

The intent of the study was to look at how well the computer programs were predicting the energy requirements of the cows, in relation to the actual results the animals achieved in the various winter feeding trials.

"We just wanted to see how accurate the system was," McCartney said. "We had cows that were individually fed, so we knew exactly how much feed they ate and we knew how they performed. We also knew the weather conditions. We did it with penned cows, as well."

All of the cattle involved in the studies had been fed a low-cost, cereal-straw-based diet, supplemented with barley silage or grain, plus mineral and protein supplements.

"The NRC model is predicting that you have to feed cows more than you actually have to in reality," McCartney said.

Researcher Hushton Block said the issue with the computer models is the precision of the predictions for feed intake.

(more)

"If you're predicting intake for a 300-cow herd over four or five different years, you probably come relatively close," he said. "But if you're predicting it for 20 cows for a one-month period in a given winter, you could be overfeeding by a substantial amount."

Predictions of cow weight gain were also frequently lower than the observed actual weight gain. But, while short-term predictions of animal performance and feed intake can have a greater variance, they tend to average out over the long-term.

Block said that an important variant in the computer models is the impact of temperature. For most beef cattle, as long as it is dry and they are sheltered from the wind, temperature has little effect on them until it falls below minus 20 degrees Celsius, he noted.

Block recommended inputting a standard air temperature of plus 20 degrees Celsius when running the computer models in order to compensate for their tendency to recommend overfeeding.

"The predictions will likely still be incorrect, but, if your cattle are dry and out of the wind, the errors tend to be smaller when you assume thermal neutral conditions," he stated.

Block offered the following advice to producers:

"Plan the best feeding management you can, using the model and your performance objectives. Start feeding that ration, but watch how much feed the cattle actually eat, and monitor them again after a month to see how they are performing in relation to the amount of feed fed," he said. "Careful observation of how your cattle are doing is more accurate than the model predictions of how they might do."

The ADF study concluded that the current NRC model could be more accurate and precise, and that further research will help improve the equations used.

"Hopefully, when we get all our observations put into refinements for any new NRC models that will come out, we'll be able to do a much better job on prediction accuracy and precision," said Block. Efforts are already underway to incorporate improvements in the NRC model into the commercially available ration balancing programs used by producers.

A copy of the ADF report, *Evaluation of the NRC 1996 Feed Requirements for Wintering Beef Cows – Are We Over Feeding Our Cows/Phase 2 Lacombe, Alberta*, project number 2002005, can be obtained by phoning the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture at (306) 787-5929, or downloaded from the ministry's website at www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Duane McCartney, Research Scientist
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
Phone: (403) 782-8104
E-mail: McCartneyD@agr.gc.ca

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 08-08-33
Week of February 18, 2008

UKRAINIAN AG ENTREPRENEURS SEEK SOLUTIONS IN SASKATCHEWAN

With the world's population on the rise, countries that export agricultural goods will become essential to meeting the increasing global demand for food. That reality applies to Canada, and it also applies to another country with which Canada has many connections: Ukraine.

"Ukraine is one of a few places on earth where real potential for significant increase of agricultural output exists," said Paul Ivanicky, a Ukrainian entrepreneur visiting the province. "There is almost everything to achieve it – wonderful soils, well-trained specialists, a large labour force and growing world demand for food."

Ivanicky and his counterpart Maxim Zakharov represent Kiev Atlantic Ukraine, a joint stock company with foreign investments. The pair recently came to Saskatchewan hoping to create long-term business contacts to expand their farming operation and agribusiness located just outside the Ukrainian capital.

Their efforts have taken them to universities, livestock operations, slaughter plants and abattoirs. So far, they have been overwhelmed by the positive results of their outreach to develop partnerships with industry and adopt Western agricultural production practices, innovations and technology.

"We cannot believe the hospitality of the people here and the willingness of others to help us," Zakharov said. "We have had countless offers from organizations and professionals to come over and assist us with our livestock operation, as well as our newest venture into the beef slaughter and processing sector. It's unbelievable!"

Part of the warm reception the entrepreneurs have enjoyed may be attributable to the strong ties that exist between Saskatchewan and their home country. Many of the province's citizens have some Ukrainian ancestry in their backgrounds.

However, according to Wendell Ebbert, a Livestock Development Specialist with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, when it comes to agriculture, Ukraine is also a nation with considerable opportunity and positive potential.

(more)

"With over 42 million hectares of arable land, a European-type climate with 24 inches of annual rainfall, and 180 frost-free growing days, Ukraine will be a major land of agricultural opportunity," Ebbert said. "Twenty-five per cent of the world's richest black soil and 27 per cent of Europe's tilled soil are found in Ukraine."

The agricultural sector represents about 10 per cent of the country's gross domestic product, and is viewed by many as one of the brightest prospects for Western trade and investment.

In addition, the country is situated within 2,000 miles of a billion people, three-quarters of whom do not produce sufficient food to feed themselves.

"The world will look to Ukraine to solve a variety of its feed, food and fuel problems, and agricultural production will play a monumental role," Ebbert said.

Livestock inventories in the country have increased on a small scale since 1991 on a few private farms, although a rapid recovery in beef production as a whole remains uncertain. The Ukrainian cattle herd is comprised mainly of dairy breeds, with a small share of dual-purpose animals and meat breeds.

The poultry sector of the livestock industry is the most likely to grow first – since it offers producers the quickest return on their investment – followed by hogs, and then cattle.

In order for the company to achieve its full potential, Kiev Atlantic Ukraine will need to improve the consistency and quality of the beef it produces. They are investigating the possible use of the antibiotics and growth hormones common in American and Canadian beef production but which are not generally accepted in Europe. The company is also considering castrating bull calves – another North American practice that is uncommon in Europe – to reduce animal handling stress and eliminate dark cutters in the carcass.

The Ukrainian agricultural community is researching alternative methods to increase productivity, efficiency and overall quality of the country's beef. Given the province's existing connection with Ukraine, this may present some real opportunities for Saskatchewan agricultural entrepreneurs.

- 30 -

For more information, contact:

Wendell Ebbert, Livestock Development Specialist
Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture
Phone: (306) 878-8847
E-mail: wendell.ebbert@gov.sk.ca

Ministry of Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

Log Number: 08-08-34
Week of February 18, 2008

GREENCOVER PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO BE SHARED AND CELEBRATED

Projects that received funding from the Technical Assistant Component (TAC) of the Greencover Canada Program will be profiled at a celebration in Regina. A Greencover TAC Fair will be held at the Delta Regina on February 27 and 28. The fair is being organized by the Saskatchewan Prairie Conservation Action Plan (PCAP), one of the funding recipients.

"The funding that has been provided from the Greencover Canada TAC Program has really been a tremendous boost to a lot of non-profit groups that have been able to do a variety of activities and projects to enhance land, watershed, riparian area and shelter belt management," says Karyn Scalise, Manager of PCAP. "A primary goal of Greencover TAC was to assist with the adoption of beneficial management practices included in the Environmental Farm Plan program of the Agriculture Policy Framework."

Some of the products developed by Greencover TAC include newsletters, botanical guides, forage establishment and management bulletins, a forage species selection CD and rangeland health assessment field guides.

"Regional and provincial workshops, field days and seminars were held to increase the technical expertise of producers and land managers, and the efficacy of technology transfer staff," says Michel Tremblay, Provincial Co-Chair of the Greencover TAC Committee and Provincial Forage Specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture. "In Saskatchewan, about 50 projects were approved. The TAC Fair provides an opportunity for all of the funding recipients to share information on the work they've done, and the products they've produced."

The purpose of the fair is to provide an opportunity for funding recipients to come together to compare notes and to showcase their accomplishments. The fair will feature invited presentations, as well as display booths and poster sessions. The Regina conference will appeal to a wide range of people, including anyone who is interested in environmental and agricultural programming, producers, and land managers in Saskatchewan and rest of the Prairies, according to Scalise.

"We're hoping to attract policy makers and program developers from both the agricultural and environmental sectors, professional and technology transfer staff who are delivering the projects, those involved in communications and administration, and, very importantly, producer associations," she says.

(more)

"Another component we are planning is break-out sessions where we'll work with all the participants to solicit responses on what worked, what could be improved, and what are some new ideas for the future, so we can forward them along to the policy makers," says Scalise. "We want producer input and feedback, because the ultimate goal of this project is to increase the adoption of beneficial management practices. We want to hear from the end-users on how effective this has been, and what can be done in the future."

Information on the Greencover Canada TAC Project Fair is available by calling PCAP at (306) 352-0472 or visiting its website at www.pcap-sk.org.

-30-

For more information, contact:
Karyn Scalise, Manager
Prairie Conservation Action Plan
Phone: (306) 352-0472
E-mail: pcap@sasktel.net